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MONGOL CONQUESTS: THEIR IMPACT ON  
THE MUSLIM COUNTRIES IN WEST ASIA  
AND ON THE HUI-HUI MINORITY IN CHINA.

Haji Yusuf Chang,  
University of Chicago,  
U.S.A.



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# MONGOL CONQUESTS: THEIR IMPACT ON THE MUSLIM COUNTRIES IN WEST ASIA AND ON THE HUI-HUI MINORITY IN CHINA

## INTRODUCTION

The unprecedented emergence of the nomadic Mongol tribe as the greatest world conqueror in the 13th century, which had a population of about only 2,000,000 at the time when Temujin was elected the Great Mongol Khan in 1206,<sup>1</sup> was a very unusual event in world history that stunned all the nations throughout Asia and Europe. The destruction of the political systems, economic life, cultural institutions and social orders that the Buddhist Mongols wrought upon the Khitans, Turks, Persians, Arabs and Europeans in their three consecutive expeditions between 1220 and 1258, was so complete that these conquered peoples could not rebuild them for many generations.

What were the reasons that had made such a backward and small nomadic Mongol tribe from China's deserts become the first world conqueror in history? What was their impact on the Muslim world, Christian Europe and Confucianist China? How did they establish the three Mongol Khanates, which in turn, one after the other, adopted Islam as their state religion in place of their ancestral religion, Lamaism? How could such a small nomadic tribe conquer Sung China which was several times bigger than Mongolia? Why did they conscript millions of Muslims into military and civilian services in China and grant them the second class citizenship which was above that of the Han Chinese? Why did Khublai Khan (r.1260-1294) put the two famous descendents of the Holy Prophet Mohammad in top military and political positions in order to defeat Sung China? Why was the number of Muslims under the



Mongol rulers in China greatly increased whereas the 13th century populations of the various Muslim countries in West Asia were greatly reduced? Finally, what was the impact of the Mongol conquest of Sung China on the formation of the Hui-Hui Minority in the 13th century from the 11th century 2,000,000 Muslim scattered settlers whose ancestors came to China in the Tang-Sung times? All these questions will be discussed in this article.

## PART ONE

### IMPACT OF THE MONGOL CONQUESTS ON THE MUSLIM COUNTRIES IN WEST ASIA AND THE ISLAMIZATION OF THE MONGOL KHANATES

#### I. WHAT CAUSED THE MONGOLS TO LAUNCH THEIR EXPEDITIONS INTO WEST ASIA AND EUROPE?

When Temujin was elected the Great Mongolia Khan in 1206, he had approximately 138,000 well-trained fighting men.<sup>2</sup> From that year Temujin was called Chingis Khan (1155-1227). At that time, nobody could believe that this small nomadic tribe would one day conquer West Asia and part of Europe and build the Yuan Empire (1276-1368) to replace the Southern Sung Dynasty (1127-1276) in China.

There is no evidence in Chinese history to prove that Chingis Khan had mapped out plans to conquer West Asia and Southeast Europe. It was due only to the ignorance and ineptitude on the part of the last Shah of Khwarizm (1137-1221), whose troops murdered the good will envoy of Chingis Khan and some Mongol merchants that spurred the angry Chingis Khan to mobilize 200,000 Mongol hordes from his just captured Khitan territory to start the first Mongol expedition into West Asia with an easy conquest of the Turkish Khwarizm Shah in 1219.



This easy victory made Chingis Khan more confident in his determination of conquering the various Muslim countries in West Asia and Southeast Russia.<sup>3</sup>

The second reason that made Chingis Khan and his two grand-sons, Batu (r.1237-1255) and Hulagu (r.1256-1265) wage the three expeditions was that they discovered that most of the Arab-Turkish rulers were corrupt and impotent, their military strength deteriorated, and among them there was no close cooperation in defense against their hordes.

The third reason was that the Mongols were attracted by the immeasurable wealth and treasure possessed by the Abbassid Caliphate, the Isma'il Assassins, the various Turkish and Persian Sultanates and some European countries. To loot those valuables to finance their final war against China was one of their most important motives of their expeditions.

Finally, there were millions of young Arabs, Persians and Turks whom they could capture as slaves or soldiers. This was the reason why there were so many of the so-called Se-mu-jen, the Sematics, who served in the Yuan armies as "Hsi-yu Ch'in-chun" (Royal Army from West Territory), the "T'an-ma-ch'ih-chun." (the Farmer-soldier Garrison Troop) and foot soldiers in China.

With all the above favorable conditions, why should not Chingis Khan and his descendents have invaded West Asia and Europe when they knew that both the Muslim and Christian countries would be the easy preys of their onslaughts? Although Chingis Khan and his descendents had confidence in their conquests of West Asia and Southeast Russia, they had never expected that they themselves would one day be conquered by Islam with its Holy Power.



## II. HOW THE MONGOLS CONQUERED WEST ASIA AND SOUTHEAST EUROPE

### 1. Chingis Khan and the First Mongol Expedition (1219-1225)

Temujin, the future Chingis Khan, was born to a Mongol tribal chieftain named Yesukai in 1155. When he was still young, his father was killed by an enemy. So young Temujin, with his mother, five brothers, and one sister, took refuge in wilderness. Sonce, he was captured by his enemy, but he managed to escape from death. After struggling for more than twenty years, his wisdom, his courage and his experience in tribal warfare earned him the title of Chingis Khan (Khan of Khans), when he was 31 years old. This title was presented to him at the entire Mongol conference, the "Quriltai," held by all Mongol chieftains in 1206.<sup>5</sup> It marked the birth of a new steppe empire, which was going to shake the entire world.

The Mongol nomads were, by nature, fearless warriors. From 1206, Chingis Khan organized all able-bodied men, about 138,000 strong, into mobile fighting groups. Each warrior had a horse, sword and arrows. With these soldiers, Chingis Khan started to invade the Nuchen Chin Empire (1115-1234) south of the Great Wall, and the Tibetan West Hsia Kingdom (1038-1227) in Northwest China, to test his strength, and to loot food and valuables. It was inevitable for him to cast an envious eye on the rich agricultural land to the south, Sung China, which he hoped to conquer.

Chingis Khan's military-political strategy was that, in order to conquer China, first he had to conquer the Chin Empire south of the Great Wall. In order to conquer the Chin, he first



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had to eliminate the West Hsia in Northwest China, and Kara Khitai (West Liao) in Chinese Turkistan. Kara Khilai was not only an ally of Chin, but also Chingis Khan's old enemy. This country controlled the transcontinental highway, the Silk Road, without the convenience of which the Mongols could not communicate with Central Asia.

During the years from 1205 to 1217, he raided both West Hsia and Chin three times each. The former surrendered with heavy tributes for peace. The latter was reduced to a small territory barely able to survive. Just when he was at war with the Chin in 1217, the Khitan troops invaded Mongolia to rescue the besieged Chin. In retaliation, Chingis Khan dispatched a 20,000 crack force into Khitan's territory. Within a short period of time, his enemy was fatally defeated, and this strategic land between Mongolia and Central Asia was in Chingis Khan's hands.<sup>6</sup>

Following his conquest of Kara Khitan, when he was planning to go back to Mongolia in 1219 to resume his war with West Hsia, he received an intelligence report that his goodwill envoy and a delegation of Mongol merchants, who were sent by him to the Khwarizm Shahs, were murdered by the reckless and haughty Turks. Greatly enraged, Chingis Khan cancelled his Mongolian return. He quickly mobilized all his troops numbering more than 200,000 which included, probably, many thousands of Khitan prisoners; he personally took the command, aided by his four sons, and his hordes poured into the poorly defended Khwarizm land in the same year. Although the defender's force was twice as large as the Mongols', they could not stop the Mongol advance. Within one

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year, they lost many cities such as Otrar, Buhara and Samargand. All these cities were destroyed. The majority of their citizens were killed. Movable properties and valuables were looted. More than 30,000 artisans and craftsmen were taken prisoners. Hundreds of thousands of young Muslim Turks were forced into Mongol expedition forces.<sup>7</sup>

After rest and regrouping, the Mongol hordes marched into the area between Samargand and Balkhin in 1220. In the next year, they smashed into Khurasan, where the famous cities of Marv and Nishapur were turned into gravelands. In 1222-1223, about 20,000 cavalry under General Djbe trampled through the Caucas into Kipchaks, where he extinguished the Kipchak and Russian united forces. Also they reached the Volga River and looted Southeast Russia. Then Djibe was ordered to return to Central Asia to join the forces of the Great Khan.<sup>8</sup>

The Mongol hordes did not carry food, clothing or money, but only horses, wagons, weapons and tents. Whenever they conquered, they took everything they needed from the conquered. Between war intervals, they always rested in the conquered land, rebuilding their units and having new weapons made by the artisan prisoners. They felt at home when a beautiful city was levelled into a grazing land. In the eight years 1219-1225, Chingis Khan engulfed Central Asia and part of Russia into his empire.

With the unexpected easiness in defeating the Muslim and Christian defenders, in looting their immeasurable wealth and treasure, and in having an unlimited supply of young Muslims for military replacements, Chingis Khan was greatly encouraged



and became more audacious and determined in his long-term military strategies to conquer both the Muslim and Christian countries for the final purpose of the Mongol conquest of the whole of China.

Had the Khwarizm Turks not murdered Chingis Khan's goodwill envoy and the delegation of Mongol merchants in 1219, there would not have been any Mongol expeditions into the West at all. Then the history of West Asia and Southeast Europe of the 13th-15th centuries would be entirely different from what has been recorded. As discussed in Section I, the first Mongol expedition into West Asia and Southeast Europe was the result of an unfortunate political incident, instead of that of a military strategy prearranged by Chingis Khan.

## 2. Batu and the Second Mongol Expedition (1236-1242)

After his conquests of Central Asia, Kipchaks and Southeastern Russia (1218-1225), Chingis Khan returned to Mongolia. With reorganized troops growing in number, probably consisting largely of young Muslims, and with affluent treasure from looting, the already 70 year old warlord might have thought that he should eliminate both the West Hsia and Chin empires before the end of his life. Just at this moment, an intelligence report reached him that these two enemies had formed a military alliance. The development of this anti-Mongolian front forced him to waste no time in making his onslaught upon West Hsia in 1226. Within one year, he crushed the Tibetan empire with tremendous human and material losses. Soon after this victory, Chingis Khan died of an injury caused by falling from a horse in 1227.<sup>9</sup>



When the West Hsia, which controlled the modern Kansu and Ninghsia provinces in northwest China, disintegrated, her ally, the Chin empire, became isolated. The days of this little empire were numbered.

Now Ogodei (r. 1229-1241), the third son of Chingis Khan, was elected the second Great Khan. His first mission was to conquer the Chin according to his father's will. His war against the Chin took three years and the Mongols replaced the Chin regime in North China in 1234. So the buffer zone between the Mongols and the Sung Chinese was levelled. His next important mission was to devastate the Sung and to put entire China under his rule.

In order to eliminate the Sung, he had to have large war funds and large military forces. This might have been the reason that Ogodei ordered his nephew, Batu (r. 1237-1255), a grandson of Chingis Khan, to command the second Mongol expedition into the West in 1235. This expedition was composed of more than 500,000 troops, which was four times that of the Mongol force commanded by Chingis Khan in 1206. They marched westward along the Altai Mountains, through Kirkiz Steppe, and in 1236, they occupied the north part of the Caspian Sea. In 1237, they raided Russia. In one month, they destroyed 15 cities including Moscow, where they killed 270,000 Russians. In 1238, they wiped out the second Russian defensive forces. After a quiet year, they met strong Russian defensive resistance in Kiev, which they conquered in 1240. From Kiev they extended their destructive wars into Poland, Germany, Czechoslovakia,



Austria, Hungary, Venice, Serbia and Bulgaria in 1241-1242.

When Batu was in Venice, planning to expand his conquests into Central Europe, a royal obituary came to him from Mongolia announcing the death of the Great Khan Ogodei. This sudden news made him withdraw his troops from eastern Europe to southern Russia. Arriving in Kipchak, he immediately established his khanate, the Golden Horde. At the same time, he dispatched a task force to escort his European loot and some generals back to Mongolia where they were badly needed in the wars against the Southern Sung.<sup>10</sup>

### 3. Hulagu and the Third Mongol Expedition (1252-1258)

As soon as Ogodei Khan's forces wrapped up North China from the Chin in 1234, he moved his war machines into Central and Southwestern China. From the year of his death, 1241, until the year that Mongke was inaugurated the third Great Khan, 1251, there were see-saw battles between the Mongols and Sung Chinese. Apparently, the Mongols lacked war funds and man power to encircle the Sung from the north and south. It seems that there was no better strategy for Mongke Khan to finance and continue his wars with the Sung than by means of looting the Abbassid Caliphate, the most wealthy empire in the whole world at that time, and also by looting the Ismailite Assassins in Persia who were also a very affluent country of a terrorist sect. This might have been why Ogodei ordered his brother, Hulagu, founder of Il-khanate (r. 1256-1265), another grandson of Chingis Khan, to command a huge force of multi-races (the exact number is unknown, but it would not be less than that of



the second expedition, which numbered 500,000), to carry out the third Mongol expedition into the Muslim world, in 1252,<sup>11</sup>

After extensive preparations, Hulagu left Caracorum for Persia and Mesopotamia., by way of the Amu Dara Region in 1253. His hordes pulverized the Assassins in 1256. All the terrorists, including women and children, were slaughtered. All their movable properties and valuables were plundered. In 1258, the Mongols destroyed Baghdad, killed the last caliph al-Mustasim (r. 1248-1258) and three hundred high Arab officials, massacred more than 800,000 innocent Arabs, and sacked the entire national treasury which included the immeasurable valuables accumulated by the caliphs from the 8th century. Their value could hardly be matched by treasure owned by any European country in the 15th century.<sup>12</sup>

History was repeated again. When Hulagu in 1259 was attacking Syria and Jerusalem, and was reaching the Mediterranean, the news of the death of his brother, the Great Khan Mongke, arrived. Upon receiving this sudden news, he wrote a letter to his brother Khublai, who was in charge of the Mongol wars against Sung China, advising that the latter immediately succeed Mongke as the Great Khan. And he ordered his troops to withdraw to Mesopotamia and Persia, where he built the Il-khanate (1258-1335). At the same time, he sent a large number of his hordes back to China with, of course, the loot.

With the spoils from the Abbassids and Assassins, and with Hulagu's soldiers, Khublai Khan declared the formation of the Yuan Dynasty (1260-1368) in 1260<sup>13</sup>, pledging himself to receive

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the Mandate of Heaven to replace the decadent Sung Dynasty as the ruler of China, which was later accepted as a Chinese dynasty by Chinese historians.

### III. THE IMPACT OF ISLAM ON MONGOL CONQUERORS: ISLAMIZATION OF THE THREE KHANATES

If the world of the 13th century had been stunned by the Mongol destructive expeditions into Central Asia, the Middle East and Europe, it should have been more shaken by the Islamization of the three Mongol khanates in the 13th-14th centuries. To give up their ancestral religion, Shamanism, and to adopt Islam as their new state religion was something that Chingis Khan, his son, Chagatai, and his two grandsons, Batu and Hulagu, had never envisioned. They were the conquerors who ruled Central Asia, the Middle East and Southeast Russia, but the conquerors finally surrendered to Islam by their own will, not by force of the Muslims who were their subjects.

What was accomplished by the Mongols in their wars with the Muslims in four decades was not accomplished by the European Christians in their seven Crusades against the Muslims in 196 years (1095-1291).

On the other hand, the failure by the Arabs, Persians and Turks in their defense against the Mongols, was reversed later by the Holy Power of Islam. There had not been any religious wars between the Mongols and the Muslims. It was only when the Mongols discovered that Islam was the religion that could give them a new life and save them from their superstitious and uncultured society that they were willing to be Islamized and to be absorbed into the Muslim communities. Shamanism



was still a good religion for the Mongols living in Mongolia, but not for those living in the Muslim world.

1. The Golden Horde Khanate (1242-1419) and Islam:

The Mongols of the Golden Horde maintained Shamanist traditions until the reign of Berke (r. 1257-1267), who converted to Islam with his followers in 1257. He was the first Mongol ruler among the three Khanates who changed his religion. However, the majority of the Mongols continued to be Shamanist at this time.<sup>14</sup>

Fifty-six years later, when Oz-beg (r. 1313-1341) acceded to the throne in 1313, he formally adopted Islam as his state religion, and started to expel the Shaman priests, and thus promoted Islamic dominance. Unlike the Il-khans, who followed the Shi'ite sect, the Golden Horde followed the Hanafi.<sup>15</sup> The early conversion to Islam by the Golden Horde in 1257 was the reason why Berke Khan was opposed to Hulagu's destruction of the Abbasid Caliphate in 1258.<sup>16</sup>

2. The Il-Khanate (1256-1235) and Islam:

When Hulagu eliminated the last Abbasid Caliphate in 1258, the Byzantine Empire and some European Christian kingdoms wanted to be friends with him. They suggested to him to form a united European-Mongol front against the Mamluke Turks in Egypt. They also tried to Christianize the Mongols. However Hulagu did not come into alliance with the European Christians.<sup>17</sup>

Only seventeen years after Hulagu's death, the 3rd Il-Khan, Teguder Ahmad (r. 1282-1284) became the first Il-Khan to embrace Islam. Another eleven years later, the 7th Khan, Ghazan (r. 1295-1304), who had been a Buddhist, in one step further,



made Islam the state religion in a public ceremony on June 19, 1295. His conversion was followed by all his Mongol officials. The state over which he ruled was no longer a Mongol empire; it was an Islamic empire to be ruled by Mongols. On this matter, we have the following quotation from Kwanten's book, The Imperial Nomads, which provides us with an interesting insight into Ghazan's beliefs:<sup>18</sup>

When the Lord of Islam, Ghazan (1295-1304), became a Muslim he commanded that all the idols should be broken and all the pagodas destroyed, together with all other temples, the presence of which in Muslim countries is prohibited by the Shari't and that all the communities of idolaters (that is, Buddhists) be converted to Islam... But some preserved in their hypocrisy while others returned to their wicked beliefs. And Ghazan said: My father was an idolater and died an idolater and built for himself a temple which he made waqf (public endowment) for that community (of Buddhists). That temple I have destroyed; go ye there and live on alms.'

### 3. The Chaghatai Khanate (1227-1334) and Islam:

This was the khanate established by Chaghatai (r. 1227-1242), the second son of Chingis Khan. But it became Islamized during the reign of the last Khan, Tarmashirin (r. 1326-1334). When he converted, he ordered all members of his state to follow his adoption. At this time, Islam was prevailing in Transoxiana, but Buddhism dominated the Chinese Turkistan.<sup>19</sup>

Chaghatai Khanate was the last one Islamized. Thirty-five years later, there arose from among the descendents of Chaghatai the second Mongol world conqueror, Timurlane (1336-1405). who was the founder of the Timurid Empire (1370-1500). Brought up in a Muslim society, imbued with Mongolian traditions, and inspired by the past glories of his ancestor, Chingis Khan, Young Timur proclaimed at Samarkand the sovereign of the Chaghatai



and restorer of the Mongol Empire in 1370, at the age of 34. During his 35-year reign, 1370-1405, he subjugated twenty-seven kingdoms and principalities, and celebrated nineteen triumphant returns to his beloved Samarkand. All these conquered realms were Muslim, with the exception of only two Christian countries, Georgia and Russia. Thus Timurlane became the absolute monarch of the Muslim world.<sup>20</sup>

In the book, Institute of Timour, written by himself, he said: <sup>21</sup>

I promoted the worship of Almighty God and propagated the religion of the sacred Muhammad throughout the world ... I selected out, and treated with esteem and veneration, the Fosterity of the Prophet, and the Theologians, and the Teachers of the true Faith, and the Philosophers and the Historians.....

He even assumed the title of "Ameer Saahiba Kurraun," which was the equivalent to that of "Mahdi," the Restorer of the Laws of the Prophet. Who would have expected that of the Chingis Khan's descendants would become a fanatic Muslim ruler who vowed to conquer the world for Islam: <sup>22</sup>

After the collapse of the Timurid Empire, the religious ideology in the supremacy of Islamism believed by Timurlane was resurrected in the person of Zahir al-Din Muhammad Babur (1483-1530), his descendent in the 5th. generation, who founded the Mongul Muslim Empire (1526-1857) in India.<sup>23</sup> This was the third great Mongul Dynasty, which lasted longer than those built by Timurid and mogul Empires was the extension of Chingis Khan's world conquest war philosophy, but they were different from the Mongol Empire built by Chingis Khan. Theirs were



Mongol Muslim Dynasties, while their ancestor's dynasty was a Buddhist Mongol empire.

Now we can see that after the death of Chingis Khan, Islam became the invisible power behind the various Mongol rulers. In their religious beliefs, they abandoned Buddhism and embraced Islam. In their social status, they changed from non-Muslim conquerors to brothers-in-Islam with their subjects. In their language, Arabic was predominant over the Mongol language. In their citizenship, they considered themselves as part of the Muslim communities in West Asia and in India.

#### IV. THE IMPACT OF MONGOL CONQUESTS ON THE CONFRONTATION BETWEEN MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS.

After the Mongol conquests of West Asia and Southeastern Europe during the year 1220 to 1242, both the Muslims and Christians in the conquered countries were spiritually depressed and materially frustrated. Before the first Mongol expedition into West Asia and Southeastern Europe in 1220-1225, the principal European Christian kingdoms, such as England, France, Germany and Italy, had organized five Crusades against the Muslims in Anatolia, Jerusalem, and Egypt during a period of 125 years (1096-1221). At the end of the fifth Crusade (1218-1221) there was a rumor circulating in Europe, which<sup>24</sup>

came out of the east that a great Christian conqueror was taking the hated Moslems in reverse and sweeping away their power. The name ascribed to the conqueror was David, and some called him the son or the grandson of Prester John of India. The conqueror was in fact the famous Jenghiz Khan. European travelers in Asia looked for a prince to whom the legend of Prester John could be attached.....

To the disheartened European Christians, this legend gave them a kind of hope that one day the Christians and the Mongols



might from a united front against the Muslims. This legend was so believed true that even in the 1966 published An-Historical Atlas of China, a space in the map is given to the "Kingdom of Prester John" in Mongolia.<sup>25</sup>

While the hope of finding the 'Prester John' Kingdom continued to linger in their minds since 1221, the Christian Russians, Poles, Germans, Czechoslovakians, Austrians, Hungarians, Italians, Serbians and Bulgarians were again stricken in 1241-1242, by the Mongol hordes under the command of Batu, a grandson of Chingis Khan. This time, the Europeans suffered more heavily than in the first Mongol expedition directed by Chingis Khan. Their hope in finding Chingis Khan as the 'Prester John' was, it seems, shattered, and they were hostile towards the Mongols. The effort to woo the Mongols as friends of the European Christians was resumed by the Roman Pope Innocent.<sup>26</sup>

Innocent IV(1243-1254) who had succeeded Gregory IX (1227-1241), summoned a Council at Lyons in 1245, the chief alleged object of which was to devise measures for the protection of Christianity against this enemy(the Mongols). But even before the meeting of the Council the Pope had taken one of the steps which was to stand instead of a hearty union to resist the common foe, by sending missions to the Tartar chiefs which should call upon them to shed no more Christian blood, but to adopt the Christian faith. There seems indeed...an undercurrent of anticipation to have run through Europe that these barbarians were in some way ripe for conversion(to Christianity)... None of the Mongol princes were at this time Mahomedans, and the power of Islam over the length of Asia was for a time prostrated.

Innocent IV sent his aide, John of Plano Carpini, to Karakorum, the capital of the Great Mongol Khanate in Mongolia, to attend the inauguration of Guyuk Khan(r. 1246-1248) to the throne in 1246. In the letter from the Pope to the Great Khan, the former advised the latter to stop making wars on Christian



peoples and persuaded him to be Christianized. In reply, Guyuk Khan, whose mother was Nestorian, wrote:<sup>27</sup>

You Europeans despise other peoples because you believe in Christianity. I wonder if you know upon whom God will bless? We worship God also, with whose Help we will conquer the whole world from the east to the west.

It was obvious that both Buddhism and Nestorianism were two compatible religions in the Mongol palace. Guyuk Khan's mother was Nestorian, and she tried to influence her son to keep friendly relations with the Pope. At this time, the Mongol commanding general, I-chin-chia-t'ai, stationed in Khwarism, was also Nestorian. In 1248, he contacted French King Louis IX with the suggestion that if the King wanted to recover Jerusalem from the Muslims, he would like to lead his Mongol troops to help the Christians.<sup>28</sup> However, Louis IX did not accept this offer. With two-way diplomatic contacts of Plano Carpini and I-Chih-chia-t'ai, there was the possibility for the Mongols and European Christians to become military allies in their struggles against the Muslim Arabs and Turks.

With peace lasting ten years after the second Mongol expedition, Hūlagu(r. 1256-1265), another grandson of Chingis Khan, was ordered by the Great Khan Mögöke(r. 1251-1260) to command the third expedition into West Asia. He left Mongolia in 1253. His forces completely destroyed the Ismailite Assassians in 1253 and the last Abbassid Caliphate in 1258, but did not invade Europe. It seems that the diplomatic contacts between the Roman Pope and the Great Khan Guyuk had produced some kind of understanding between the Mongols and the Christians, but nothing concerning how to work against the Muslims.



However, under these unfavourable conditions, the Muslim world had been deprived of their military power and the leadership. It was completely controlled by the Mongols except for the Turks in Egypt and Anatolia. The whole world believed that doomsday had come to the Muslims. Few people could expect that the three Mongol Khanates, the Golden Horde, Ilkhan and Chaghatai, would be one by one willingly Islamized on their own accord, and voluntarily become Brothers-in-Islam with their subjects, the conquered Arabs, Turks belief from Buddhism to Islam, which was not a result of any super Muslim power, had paved the foundation for the Seljuk Turks to build the future Ottoman Empire, and the creation of both Mongol Timurid and Mingul Empires in the 14th and 15 centuries. All the countries in Central Asia and the Middle East, whether controlled by the Arabs, the Turks, the Persians or the Mongol remained in Muslim hands after the Mongols themselves had become part of the Muslim community.

PART TWO

THE MUSLIM CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE BUILDING OF THE YUAN DYNASTY AND  
THE IMPACT OF YUAN DYNASTY ON THE FORMATION OF THE MUSLIM  
( HUI-HUI) MINORITY IN CHINA

I. MUSLIM CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE BUILDING OF THE  
YUAN DYNASTY.

Khublai Khan(r. 1260-1294), the founder of the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368), was a nomadic Buddhist. During his reign, he had not done anything to abuse Confucianism. That was in great contrast to the earlier military and cultural destructions that

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Chingis Khan, Batu and Halagu had wrought upon the various Muslim countries during their expeditions into Central Asia and the Middle East. What made him different from his grandfather, his cousin and brother? How could he build a Chinese styled dynasty which was recognized by the Chinese as one that had received the 'Mandate of Heaven'? Who were the people who served him and helped him to conquer and rule China? Who were the people he trusted most? Who were the people who benefitted most from the empire built by Khublai? All these important and interesting historical subjects require our careful analyses and understanding.

### 1. Khublai Khan and His 'Brain Trust'

China had been a Confucianist state since the Han times (206 B.C. to 220 A.D.). Whoever the dynastical rulers from Han to Ch'ing (1645-1911) were in a period of twenty-two centuries, whether being Chinese or non-Chinese, they had almost without exception build their empires upon the political philosophy of Confucius (552-479 B.C.) Unlike Catholicism in the Roman Empires and Islam in the Islamic Caliphates whose theocratic power had dictated the religious and political life of the Christians and the Muslims, China's Confucianism was purely a humanitarian and political philosophy which Chinese rulers, statesmen and scholars had to learn and practice. To the entire Chinese population, it had been the main force behind their universal education. No ruler before the middle of the 20th century could rule China without understanding and practicing Confucianism.

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Khublai Khan was a strong and wise ruler. He had the ambition to put China under his rule when he was still a Mongul prince. He knew that he should thoroughly understand Confucianist philosophy if he wanted to be emperor of China. He liked Confucianist philosophy but he did not trust the Chinese people. In 1251, the Great Khan Mongke (r. 1251-1259), his elder brother, conferred upon him the land of Shansi and Honan provinces as his feudal territory. Mongke also assigned to him the most important responsibility for the conquest of Sung China. With the fief land and the population under his control and with the imperial mission on his shoulders, the first thing he did was to invite, with great honour, men of learning, integrity and courage to serve in his principality. This was how Khublai started to create a supreme council inside the prince's palace.

Aside of political advisors, Khublai needed talented generals who were not only champions of martial arts but also men well versed in military strategy and thoroughly familiarized with the knowledge of how to train and command soldiers. Only when we know how the Mongul forces were formed in the 13th century will we find out what kind of military geniuses Khublai had recruited and later put them in command of the Mongul forces in the final war for the conquest of Southern and China in 1271-1277.

First we have to know the number of Mongul hordes was only 150,000 during the life of Chingis Khan (1161-1227), when the total population of the Monguls was about 2,000,000. In their second and third invasions of West Asia and Southeast



Europe, and Khublai's final assault on Sung China, each time the Mongul forces numbered about 500,000, or even more, thrown onto the battle-fields. Besides those forces in fighting, there probably was an equal number of non-combatant troops stationed in North and Southwest China. At Khublai's time, there must have been at least 1,000,000 soldiers altogether, in addition to the mongul troops numbering about another million stationed in Central Asia., the Middle East and Southeast Russia. All these figures could tell us that the majority of the so-called Mongul hordes, whether in China or in the West, were not Monguls, but the "Se-mu-jen" the Central Asia Muslims. In China, there were three other minority soldiers besides the Monguls, i.e. the Manchurian-Jergens, the Tibetan-Tanguts, and the Northern Chinese. The importance of the Muslims in the formation of the Mongul forces might be the reason why Khublai of had made two top Muslim leaders to be his confidants and later the commanders of his troops in his last war against Sung China.

There is not even a shred of evidence in Yuan History which tells us that there was a supreme council in Khublai's earlier princely household and later imperial palace. But our careful studies of his and his confidants' biographies lead us to venture the belief that a small confidential nucleus of men, with Khublai as the chief, was in existence. This group decided the most important national matters, and in modern terms, may be called the 'Brain Trust.' Among Khublai's top aides, we have found that only the following five men with unusual loyalty, wisdom, integrity and courage were



probably those who worked under Khublai Khan is the supreme council (two Confucianist scholars, one Arab Sayyed prince, one Mongol prince and one Mongol-Arab Sayyed prince):

Yao Shu (1261-1280)  
Chinese Scholar.  
Advisor, 1252-61.  
Vice Prime Minister, 1267-72.  
(recommended by An T'ung.)  
Grand Secretary, 1274-80.

Sayyed Edjill Chams-din Omar  
(1280-1279)  
Arab Prince.  
Vice Prime Minister, 1261-63.  
Prime Minister, Shansi, 1264-72.  
Prime Minister, Yunnan, 1273-79.  
Builder of Muslim and Confucianist  
communities in Southern China.-

Hao Ching (1222-1275)  
Chinese Scholar.  
Advisor, 1252-59.  
Yuan Ambassador to Southern S  
(Hostage in Sung Court,  
1260-74)

An T'ung (1244-1293)  
Mongol Prince.  
Prime Minister, 1265-79.  
A man of wisdom and integrity  
whose sister was the  
wife of Sayyed Pai-yen

Sayyed Pai-yen (1235-1294)  
Mongol-Arab Prince.  
Vice Prime Minister, 1265-79.  
Minister of Defense, 1270-73.  
Commander-in-Chief, 1274-76.  
Minister of Defense, 1276-84.

## 2. Two Confucianist Scholars: The Advisor and Teachers of Khublai Khan.

Prince Khublai had recruited many Chinese scholars into his service, among whom Yao Shu and Hao Ching were most prominent. Both were invited and appointed by Khublai as his advisors in 1252. Yao was 20 years senior of Hao. Both were well-known Confucianist teachers, and both tutored Khublai in Confucianist philosophy, which in fact was the source of the political force that enabled Khublai to build the Yuan Dynasty in China.

Hao Ching said in one of his letters to Khublai when the latter was still a Mongol prince: "In ancient times, the ruler unified the country chiefly by means of benevolent actions instead of using mere force.....If Heaven bestows the(throne) on him, it would be unnecessary to kill(the people); and if



Heaven does not bestow the (throne) on him, what would be the point to kill!"<sup>29</sup> That was what Confucius preached to the rulers of his time on how to unify a state and rule it.

On his expedition to Ta-li territory in Yun-nan in 1252, Prince Khublai took Yao Shu with him. One evening, Yao Shu told the prince the episode of how a famous Sung general named Ts'ao Pin(930-999), was ordered by the first Sung emperor, Chao K'uang-yin(927-976), to conquer the Kingdom of Nan-T'ang. Ts'ao Pin accomplished the mission without killing one innocent man, or disturbing the business marts in the city of Nan-King.<sup>30</sup> Khublai was greatly moved and on the next day when he was riding with Yao Shu, spoke aloud: "Lest night you told me about how Ts'ao Pin did not commit killing in war. This I can do, this I can do!". In the next year, when the Mongol hordes reached the city of Ta-li, he instructed Yao Shu to write on large silk flags the "Order Not to Kill" to be posted in the city. As a result of this benevolent order, the population of Ta-li was saved.<sup>31</sup>

Yao Shu's advice inspired Khublai with confidence that he could conquer China without too much reliance on swords. Yao Shu was not only the adviser of Khublai, he was also the teacher of Sayyed Edjill Chams-din Omar, Sayyed Pai-yen and the young Prime Minister, An T'ung. Among them, there was mutual trust and respect. In 1267, Yao Shu was recommended as the Vice Prime Minister by An T'ung, who was only 23 years old at that time. He was the youngest but a very wise and capable Mongol statesman in Yuan history.<sup>32</sup>

As to the other Confucianist scholar, Hao Ching, he was



appointed by Khublai as his ambassador to the Southern Sung court in 1260. But, unluckily, he was detained as a hostage by the Chinese. He was not released until 1274 when his Muslim student, Sayyed Pai-yen, who was the Commander-in-Chief, led the Mongol and Muslim forces into Sung territory. But unfortunately Hao Ching died in 1275.

During the 15 years when Hao Ching was a political prisoner at the Sung Court, Yao Shu was the only Confucianist statesman in the 'Brain Trust'. He was loyal to the Khan. His cooperation with Sayyed Edjill Chams-din Omar, Sayyed Pai-yen and An T'ung enabled Khublai Khan to build a Chinese styled Dynasty that was recognized by Chinese historians. We do not know whether he had a hand in the appointment of Chams-din Omar as the governor-general of Yun-nan in 1273, but we do know that it was Yao Shu who recommended Sayyed Pai-yen to command the entire Mongol and Muslim forces in the final expedition against the Southern Sung in 1274. While Omar was pacifying Yun-nan and Pai-yen was in the Yang-Tzu valley directing the final war, Yao Shu and An T'ung were taking care of all affairs in Khublai's palace in Peking. Such an excellent team-work, headed by Khublai Khan and participated by two Chinese scholars, one Mongol prince and two Muslim Sayyeds, was hardly seen in another Chinese dynastical history, except in that of the Ming Empire in the 14th Century.<sup>33</sup>

### 3. The Three Muslim Commanders and the Three Fronts Khublai's war with Sung China.

The wars between the Sung Chinese and the Mongols had long been ignited before Khublai became the Great Khan. It was the



land of mountains, rivers and forest, infested with malaria and was inhabited by several hundreds of thousands of non-Chinese tribesmen who were in sympathy with the Sung Empire. All of these factors were disliked by the Mongols. If these people revolted against the Mongols, their violence could disturb the peace and order in Ssu-ch'uan and Shensi, which had been created in 1264-1265 by Sayyed Edjill Omar. This could cause serious political and military problems for the Mongols in the ang-tzu Valley front. Therefore, the Yun-nan front was a troublesome zone which needed political solution rather than a military conquest.

The third front was in Fu-kien and Kwang-tung provinces in Southeast China. They were coastal areas, where the Sung Empire still had a large fleet, but it was command by an Arab-Chinese, General P'u Shou-keng, the military Pacification Commissioner of the Southeast China Coast and the Superintendent of the Merchant Shipping in Ch'uan-chow.<sup>34</sup> Without a much larger navy, the Mongols could not easily take over these areas. Because the Mongols did not have such a navy, the best thing they could do was to use political strategy instead of military force. It seems that this was exactly what Khublai's Brain Trust' had planned to do in this front, i.e. to win over the allegiance of P'u Shou-keng.

The war in the Yang-tzu Valley would decide who, the Chinese or the Mongols, could unify China. But the political wars in Yun-nan and the Southeast coastal provinces waged by the

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Mongols were important factors in making the Mongol war in the Yang-tzu Valley a victory or a defeat, and in shortening the Sung-Yuan final struggle or in prolonging these seesaw fightings. These three fronts were inter-related and, strangely enough, the leading actor responsible for bringing victory to Khublai Khan in each of these three fronts was a Muslim.

A. Sayyed Ya'kub Pai-yen: the Commander-in-Chief of the Mongol Forces in Yang-tzu Valley Front, and the Conqueror of Sung China.

Sayyed Ya'kub Pai-yen, canonized as Prince of Huai-an, was a descendent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad in the 32nd generation.<sup>35</sup> He was born in Pa-lin(al-Bahrain) in the Persian Gulf in 1235 to an influential Mongol-Arab family. His father, Hsiac-ku-t'ai, was a general under Hulagu(r. 1256-1265), the founder of the Il-Khanate. His grandfather, Ah-la-hei, was a general under Chingis Khan. He was the Mongol commander who in 1221 captured the city of Khodjand in Central Asia. As a reward, the Great Khan gave Khodjand to him as a fief; where young Ah-la-hei married a female descendent of the Holy Prophet in the 30th generation. Pai-yen, therefore, inherited the title of Sayyed.<sup>36</sup> In his youth, he was educated in Islamic schools in Persia.

In 1263, when Pai-yen was 28 years old, he was sent by Hulagu as his personal envoy to Emperor Khublai, who, the moment after he saw the handsome young man, said: "you are the man who should not serve a feudal lord. Why don't you serve me!" Once the emperor said so, who would dare to say no.

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second Great Khan Ögödei(r. 1229-1244) who began to invade the Southern Sung in 1231. After him, both Guyuk(r. 1246-1250) and Möngke(r. 1251-1259), the third and fourth Great Khans, continued to attack the Chinese in Ssu-ch'uan, Hu-pai, Hu-nan and Yun-nan provinces. For forty-three years, 1231-1274, the Mongols could not break through the Sung defense until Khublai Khan accomplished the Mongol conquest in three years, 1274-1276.

Soon after he succeeded to the throne in 1260, Khublai Khan immediately sent his Chinese advisor, Hao Ching, to Sung court to negotiate for a peaceful Chinese surrender. But his diplomatic approach failed because Hao Ching was held hostage by the Chinese. Now knowing that there was no hope for a peaceful solution, the Great Khan decided to work out his long term military and political strategies for the conquest of Sung China. As his predecessors had already put North and Northwest China under their control, the Yang-tzu River Valley, Southwest and Southeast China were the three fronts that Khublai Khan had to capture before he could unify China.

The first front was the Yang-tzu valley, which was the home of the Southern Sung. It consisted of Che-kiang, Kiang-su, An-hui, Kiang-si, Hu-pai, Hu-nan and Ssu-ch'uan, densely populated and wealthy provinces where the Sung Empire still had a strong navy and a fairly good army. To have victory in this front Khublai had to use a very large military force which needed to be commanded by a great general who must also be an expert in using political ploys at the same time.

The second front was Yun-nan, the largest and important province in Southwest China bordering Annam. It was a vast



Right away, it seems young Pai-yen became a member of Khublai's 'Brain Trust.' At the conference table, whenever he was consulted about national problems, his opinion always was impressive and practical. The Emperor was so happy with him that he ordered his Prime Minister, An T'ung, a young Mongol statesman of only 20 years old, to marry his sister to Pai-yen, saying: "To be the wife of Pai-yen would never bring disgrace to your house!"<sup>37</sup> Knowing Pai-yen was a Sayyed, Khublai permitted him to rebuild the famous mosque, the Hui-Hui Wan-shan Ssu (The Ten Thousand Virtue Mosque), in Ch'ang-an (Si-an) in 1263.<sup>38</sup>

In 1265, Sayyed Pai-yen was appointed as the Vice Prime Minister, while his brother-in-law, An T'ung, was the Prime Minister. Khublai did not have any one of his sons work in his cabinet, but he relied upon these two young statesmen as his left and right hands. In 1270, Pai-yen became the Minister of War, which signalled that the preparation for the final war with Sung China was taking shape. In 1274, Khublai started his final war. He installed Pai-yen as the Commander-in-Chief of all the Mongol and Muslim forces, which numbered several hundred thousands, possibly one half million.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, Sayyed Edjill Omar was the Governor of Yun-nan in the second front.

On the departure of Commander-in-Chief Sayyed Pai-yen from the capital, Khublai said to him: "As you know in early Northern Sung time, General Ts'ao Pin pacified the Kingdom of Nan-T'ang, south of the Yang-Tzu River, without unnecessary killing. You should understand my mind and be my 'Ts'ao Pin'!"<sup>40</sup>



Khublai's anti -killing policy was a contradiction to the killing practiced in wars by Chingis Khan, Batu and Hulagu.

In the Yang-Tzu Valley front, the Commander in Chief spent less than three years before he brought Southern Sung Dynasty to capitulation in 1276. Many battles were fought, whenever the Sung defenders lost the battles and surrendered, they were released and, with few exceptions, were given back their posts or assigned to other jobs.

As to the Chinese refugees, orphans, elders and sick people, Pai Yen always ordered his troops to shelter them, feed them and give them medical care. Public granaries were opened for them.<sup>41</sup> Soldiers were to be executed if they committed robbing, raping or other violent acts. He also ordered that the royal tombs of the Sung Dynasty should be protected from wanton destruction.<sup>42</sup>

In the first year after the war, he once risked his life when he, with less than one hundred horsemen, was confronted with a Sung force of two thousand strong in Ying Chow (Wu-Ch'ang in Hu-Pei). His small cavalry was not only unharmed by the overwhelming enemy, but he personally slew its commander and captured its lieutenant, and his cavalry killed 500 Chinese soldiers.<sup>43</sup>

When the Mongul army seiged Kiang-Chow (Kiu-Kiang in Kiang-si) in 1275, the Sung Minister of Defense, Lu Shih K'uei, surrendered with the city to Pai-Yen. In turn, Lu was re-appointed to the governorship of that city. Then Lu entertained Pai Yen with a fabulous dinner and presented to him two Sung royal ladies.



Enraged and disgusted by such unethical behaviour of the corrupted Sung Minister of War, the Muslim generalissimo said: "I was ordered by the Son of Heaven to wage war on the Sung gine as a punishment for her guilts. How dare you use women to shake my conscience?" and he ordered the dirty shameless Chinese turncoat, Lu Shih K'uei, expelled in disgrace.<sup>44</sup>

One of the decisive battles between the Monguls and Chinese was the one that was fought in Han-Kou and Wu-Ch'ang area in the Yang-Tzu River Valley before the end of 1275. The side had several of thousands of men. Only the war junka mobilized by Pai Yen was about ten thousand. In the end, the entire Sung land and naval forces were almost wiped out by the Monguls.<sup>45</sup> On the victory, the Chinese historian, Sung Lien (1310-1381), the compiler of Yuan Shih wrote: "Pai-yen, who was well versed in military strategy and quick in making decisions, commanded two hundred thousand men in war against the Sung just as he commanded one man. All his lieutenants respected him as a human being with supernatural intelligence."<sup>46</sup>

After the capture of Kiang-chow, Pai-yen led his force to Ch'ih-chow in An-hui. The Sung commander gave up fighting. The next day when Pai-yen discovered the Assistant Prefect, Ong-fa, and his wife had committed suicide to demonstrate their loyalty to the Sung Emperor, Pai-yen was greatly moved and ordered his aides to bury the martyrs according to military ceremony. He despised the Sung turncoats, but he gave them a new life and used them to attract more surrenders in order to reduce the deaths of Sung soldiers and the suffering

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of the Chinese people.<sup>47</sup>

There was another episode about his incorrupt personality. On his victorious return to Peking in 1276. Khublai Khan ordered all the high officials of his palace to go out of the capital to welcome his Commander-in-Chief. At the head of them, the Minister of Treasury, Ahmad(d. 1282), an Uighur, was standing on the sidewalk, waiting to meet the great general. Ahmad was the most corrupt official in Yuan history, whom Pai-yen did not like. When Pai-yen saw him, he took off a jade buckle from his belt and gave it to Ahmad, saying: "Although the Sung treasure had so many precious jade pieces, yet nothing was worth taking. Please do not undervalue this!" Ahmad felt that he was being humiliated, so he spread a rumor that the general had taken the famous jade peach-cup from the Sung treasure when he captured Lin-an, the capital of Southern Sung. Upon hearing the rumor, Khublai ordered the Board of Censory to have Pai-yen investigated.<sup>48</sup>

At this critical moment, the Director of the Department of Astrology and Medicine, Ai Hsueh, who was a Syrian born Christian scholar, an incorrupt official and a moral friend of Pai-yen, having learned that Pai-yen had been entrapped by the corrupt Ahmed into a crime that he had never committed, was so shocked that he ran into the palace. When he saw Emperor Khublai, he k'ow-t'owed and said that a man of integrity like Pai-yen could not have done such an unethical thing and he was obviously framed by Ahmad! As a result of his loyal remonstrance, Khublai released Pai-yen and reinstated him to his position. Not long



after, Ahmad was assassinated, and someone presented the jade peach-cup to Khublai, who, in shock, said: "it was because of this jade cup that my loyal confidant had almost been betrayed!"<sup>49</sup>

On this episode, Sung Lien again commented in Yuan Shih:

"After the capitulation of Southern Sung, Pai-yen returned to the capital with nothing but his uniform and his sleeping bag, and he never boasted of political and military merits."<sup>50</sup>

According to Ma Wen-sheng, Sayyed Ya'kub Pai-yen was an Islamic scholar and a devoted Muslim. Never did he forget that he was a descendent of the Holy Prophet. He always carried the Holy Koran with him and read it after daily prayers. He studied Confucianist philosophy under Yao Shu and Hae Ching. In 1282, he went to Hang-chow and personally supervised the rebuilding of the grand mosque which had been destroyed in the 1276 war.<sup>51</sup>

He was the generalissimo of one million men; in less than three years, he captured from Southern Sung thirty-seven Fu(counties), one hundred twenty-eight Chow(districts smaller than Fu) and seven hundred thirty-three Hsien(districts smaller than Chow).<sup>52</sup> He conquered Sung China in three years, while the three Great Khans before Khublai, namely Ogodei, Guyuk and Mongke, had spent forty-three years in wars with China but failed to conquer it.

3. Sai-tien-ch'ih, Sayyed Edjill Chams-din Omar, the Governor of Yun-nan and the Master-mind of the Southwest China Front.

Sai-tien-ch'ih, Prince of Hsien-yang, whose Arab name was Sayyed Edjill Chams-din Omar(1200-1279), was the title given to him by Chingis Khan who discovered him in Central Asia and brought him to China in 1225. He was a descendent of the Holy



Prophet in the 31st generation, and that of Prince So-fei-er in the 5th generation. So-fei-er came to North China with his 5,300 tribesmen as Arab immigrants from Central Asia in the 11th century during the reign of Sung Emperor Shen-tsung (1066-1085). Since then they settled down and became the early ancestors of the Muslims (Hui-Hui) in North China. Their descendants continued to travel back and forth between China and Central Asia, engaged in trade or religious business even when the Mongols conquered North China in the early 13th century.<sup>33</sup>

When Sayyed Omar met Chingis Khan in Central Asia, he pledged allegiance to the Great Khan with his one thousand horsemen. Chingis Khan was very pleased with him and made him captain of the royal guards. During the reign of the second Great Khan, Ogodei (r.1229-1241), he was the Chief Judge of Yen-king (Peking). In 1257, when the fourth Great Khan, Mongke (r.1251-1259) directed the invasion forces into Ssu-ch'uan province, Omar administered the military finance and supplies so well that not one army had been neglected in their needs. In 1261, Yuan Emperor Khubai made him the Vice Prime Minister. Three years later, he became Governor-General of Shen-si and Ssu-ch'uan provinces. In a period of three years, the population, the army and the taxes were all considerably increased and the two provinces began to show prosperity and peace. Khublai put all the provincial officials under his control.<sup>34</sup>

1274 was the decisive year for Khublai to start his final war against Southern Sung in order to make his Yuan Dynasty the sole sovereignty of entire China. To achieve his ambition, he



appointed Sayyed Omar as the 'P'ing-chang Cheng-shih, ' the Prime Minister and Governor of Yung-nan, whose mission was:

- a. Politically to pacify the various dissident non-Chinese tribes, who were sympathizers of the Southern Sung Empire, and to change their allegiance to Khublai;
- b. Militarily to cut off the land communications between Southern Sung and Annam so as to protect the southeastern rear of Sayyed Pai-yen's forces in the Yangtzu River front.

At the ceremony of his appointment, Khublai said: "Yunnan, where I have been before, an area populated with non-Chinese tribes, is very difficult to rule if the governor is a wrong man. I have been looking for the man who is able and cautious to pacify and rule this province, but I have not found anyone until I found you!"<sup>55</sup>

In Yun-nan, there were many non-Chinese tribes and many tens of thousands of Muslims who settled there from T'ang times. Most of the non-Chinese tribes were uncivilized. Soon after his arrival in this underdeveloped land, Governor Sayyed Omar began to teach these primitive peoples how to execute their marriage and burial according to Confucianist customs; how to plant rice, hemp and mulberry-trees; and how to build lakes for preserving water for use in time of drought. More importantly, this Muslim statesman constructed Confucianist temples and schools where the people could learn Confucianist classics. He allotted public land to schools to solve their financial problems. Within a short period of time, the literacy standard and the economic



life of all the Yun-nan people were greatly improved.<sup>56</sup> As a Muslim leader, he built also mosques and schools for the Muslims.

In 1276, one of the non-Chinese tribes, Lo-pan-tien, revolted. Emperor Khublai ordered Sayyed Omar to pacify the rebels, and if necessary, he could use force. Upon receipt of this imperial order, he looked very sad. He was questioned by his lieutenants about his sadness. In answer, he said: "I am not worried about myself, but about you. If fighting was started, some of you would die. If my soldiers plundered the city, it would be impossible for the people to survive."

However, he and his troops reached the dissident city. For three days, they waited for the rebels to surrender, but in vain. His lieutenants wanted to attack. But Sayyed Omar did not approve. Instead, he sent an emissary to admonish the dissident people who, after three days, again showed no sign of submission. His soldiers were again asking him to allow them to attack. Against their request was rejected. Disregarding their leader, some officers and soldiers sneaked out of their tents and climbed the city wall to attack the defenders. Their disobedience enraged Sayyed Omar so much that he at once ordered the 'beating of the gong' to recall them, and he had them arrested, and put them on trial for disobedience. The severe punishment was death. On this critical matter of military discipline, Sayyed Omar announced: "The Son of Heaven ordered me to pacify Yun-nan. His Majesty never ordered me to kill! Anyone who attacked the dissidents without my approval must be punished according to the military code." All his lieutenants



asked for mercy, begging to allow the law-breakers to be tried after the surrender of the rebels. When this news reached the ears of the Lo-pan-tien tribal chief, he declared to his people: "The Prime Minister is so tolerant and kind to us, it would bring disaster to us if we continue to oppose his admonishment!" Thus he came out of this city and personally surrendered to Sayyed Omar. Having heard of this incredible event, all the non-Chinese tribesmen, which numbered a total of four hundred thousand households, one after the other, pledged allegiance to Yuan Emperor Khublai.<sup>57</sup>

At the death of Sayyed Edjill Chams-din Omar in 1279, at the age of 79, the cries of sorrow by the peoples in the whole Yunnan province were heard near and far and even reached to the great solitudes. In their eulogy, the delegates from Annam wrote: "Ping-chang Cheng-shih Sai-tien-ch'ih was the one who gave us life, the one who nourished us. He was not only our father, but was also our mother!" The Annamese read their eulogy aloud with tears and cries!<sup>58</sup>

In memory of the merits of Sai-tien-ch'ih Sayyed Edjill Chams-din Omar, Emperor Khublai issued an edict to all the Yunnan officials that they should rule the province according to the rules and regulations formulated by Sai-tien-ch'ih, and that they were not allowed to make any changes.<sup>59</sup> The Great Khan lost a loyal servant, a close friend and a teacher. Sayyed Omar was a man of perfection, who had fulfilled the mission of a descendent of the Holy Prophet; fulfilled the duty of a respected official of an emperor; and fulfilled the duty of a sincere student of Confucianist philosophy. He succeeded in the



pacification and rule of Southwest China chiefly by means of political strategy and benevolent persuasion instead of using military force. The value of his political accomplishments was as high as the military accomplishments of his colleague, Sayyed Ya'kub Pai-yen. Both were rare and extraordinary figures in Chinese and Islamic histories.

C. Sung (Arab) General P'u Shou-keng's Changing Allegiance to Khublai: Key Figure in Shortening Sung-Yuan War in the Southeast China Front

The show-down between the Sung and the Yuan was clearly in favor of the latter when Sayyed Edjill Omar had pacified Yun-nan and Sayyed Ya'kub conquered the Sung capital, Lin-an, in 1276. Because the Sung Emperor Kung-ti (r. 1275-1276) capitulated to the Yuan Dynasty, legally speaking, that was the end of the Sung Dynasty. However, a few Sung loyalists, such as Lu Hsiu-fu and Chang Shih-chieh, tried to uphold the Sung royal line by making two child-princes emperors and fighting against the overwhelming Mongol forces in Fu-kien and Kwang-tung, disregarding Emperor Kung-ti's official surrender. Their only hope was in getting the support of the Sino-Arab General P'u Shou-keng, who was at that time the commander-in-chief of both the Sung navy and land forces in these two provinces. With his help, they hoped to prolong their simmering resistance and some day, to recover China from the Mongols. In the beginning, their plan was doomed to failure because, although they were looking for P'u Shou-keng's help, they did not treat him as a friend. Let us read what the Yuan historian, T'o T'o, said about them and P'u Shou-keng in Sung History:<sup>60</sup>



The Sung child-emperor Shih (r. 1276-1278) wanted to enter Ch'uan-chou. Pacification Commissioner P'u Shou-keng [was suspected] to have other ambition. When emperor Shih's ships arrived at Ch'uang-chou, Shou-keng paid a visit, and asked [the child-emperor] to stay. The Prime Minister, Chang Shih-chieh, did not agree. Someone advised Shih-chieh to detain Shou-keng so [they could take control of his fleet]. But Shih-chieh again did not agree. Right after, because of the shortage of ships, the [royal force] captured [Shou-keng's] ships and confiscated his properties. Being so enraged, Shou-keng ordered [his soldiers] to put members of the Sung royal family, some high officials, and the Huai [area] soldiers to death in the 12th month of 1276. Then Shou-keng and the Ch'uan-chou Prefect, T'ien Chen-tzu, went over to the [Yuan side] in the following month.

After the bloodshed, the Sung emperor and his loyalists escaped to an island, Kang-chou, in Kwang-tung, where the emperor was drowned. His younger brother Ping was then made emperor but he also met his death when his loyalist, Lu Hsiu-fu, was carrying him and plunged to death in the sea.

Even if P'u Shou-keng had gone along with the Sung loyalists in their resistance, their combined strength could never stand against the huge Mongol hordes. His defection, in fact, had shortened the hopeless resistance of the Sung, saved many cities from destruction and protected millions of innocent Chinese in these coastal provinces from slaughter and homelessness. In addition, many thousands of the foreigners, Muslims, Christians and Jews who were in Ch'uan-chou as traders, were saved.

Shou-keng had been a Sung official for more than thirty years. He had nothing in common with the Mongols. But since, and Muslim Sayyed Pai-yen was the Commander-in-Chief of the Mongol forces in the Yang-tzu River front, there seemed to be some kind of personal contact between them. After the 1276 capture of Sung



capital, Lin-an, Pai-yen dispatched two secret agents, Pu Po<sup>61</sup> and Chou Ch'ing to see Shou-keng with a personal message. He was advised to come over to the Mongol side, in order to save Ch'uan-chou and the population from war and destruction, and to bring the struggle over the Yuan dynasty to an immediate end. When Shou-keng was forced to fight a battle of life and death with Sung troops who had captured his ships and confiscated his properties, Sayyed Pai-yen ordered his general, So Tu, leading an army, to rescue Shou-keng from defeat. As a result of this Mongol assistance, the homeless Sung force left Ch'uan-chou for Kwang-tung. Under these circumstances, Shou-keng had no choice but to change his allegiance. That was how the Mongols scored a military and political victory in the Southeast China front with the changing sides of P'u Shou-keng through the mediation of Sayyed Pai-yen. As a reward to Shou-keng for shortening the Sung-Yuan war, Khublai Khan appointed him as the Commander-in-Chief of all the Yuan forces in Fu-kien and Kwang-tung and also the civil governor of Kiang-si province.

#### 4. Without the Muslims, Khublai Khan Could Not Build the Yuan Dynasty

The Mongol hordes of Chingis Khan, Batu and Hulagu conquered Central Asia, the Middle East and Southeast Europe by force. They were by nature nomadic warriors who lived in tents, wore sheep furs, travelled on horses, and were well trained in using swords and bows. They could travel thousands of miles without taking any food supply except domestic animals. The life habits,



soldierly character, close knitted tribal unity, swift and mobile horse-warfare technique, and mentality in diminishing the value of human life of the Mongols had made them capable of raiding or enslaving small and large countries in West Asia and Europe in the 13th century without resorting much to political means. But when they confronted the Chinese Confucianist society and culture, their pure military ferocity alone could not subdue the Chinese.

Khublai Khan was probably the most intelligent Mongol ruler who recognized that in order to rule China he had to use both military and political strategies in war and in peace. Among the Mongols, there were many good fearless generals but very few strategists. Knowing the weak point of his own people, Khublai was inclined to find the statesmen and generals able to help him to conquer and rule China from the ranks of the highly educated and cultured Chinese and Arabs who, at this time, were eager to be respected and employed by the Mongol rulers. This was how Yao Shu, Hao Ching, Sayyed Edjill Omar and Sayyed Ya'kub were selected by Khublai as his confidants. These two Chinese and two Muslims, in addition to the Mongol genius, An T'ung, were those who made Khublai the victor in the Chinese-Mongol war, and the first Emperor of Yuan Dynasty.

Without Sayyed Edjill Omar, Sayyed Pai-yen and P'u Shou-keng, Khublai could not have eliminated Southern Sung Empire. Without An T'ung and Yao Shu, Sayyed Edjill Omar and Sayyed Pai-yen might not have been chosen by Khublai as his two



Commanders-in-Chief in the Yang-tzu River and Southwest China fronts. Without Sayyed Pai-yen, P'u Shou-keng might not have changed his allegiance to Khublai. Without An T'ung, Yao Shu might not have been trusted and honored by Khublai. Without Khublai's wisdom, open-mindedness and determination, all these capable political and military leaders might not have been in his service.

Khublai's military and political conquest of Sung China was the fruit of the mutual trust and close teamwork of the two Mongols, two Chinese and two Muslims. With the shortage of any one of these six personalities, the replacement of the Sung Empire by the Yuan Dynasty never might have happened.

The Mongols were a small minority in China. It was impossible for them alone to conquer and rule China. Since the Mongols did not trust the Chinese, they had to depend on the non-Chinese people in building their huge military power and in administering their governments. Therefore, the Se-mu-jen (Semetics), particularly the Muslim Arabs, Persians and Turks, were brought into China by the Mongols, not in hundreds of thousands, but in millions, to serve in the Mongol armies and civil governments. This was why the Mongol rulers treated the Muslims as a people whose social status was next only to the first class Mongols. This was the beginning of the formation of the Hui-Hui (Muslim) Minority in China under the reign of Khublai Khan.



## II. IMPACTS OF YUAN DYNASTY ON THE FORMATION OF THE MUSLIM (HUI-HUI) MINORITY IN CHINA

### 1. The Silk Road: Main Artery for the Expansion of Islam in Central Asia and China

The Silk Road, which was opened up after the Western Hsiung-nu (Huns) Empire, had been destroyed by the Han Chinese before the end of the first century B.C. It was the main artery for the expansion of Islam in China and Central Asia during the 8th-13th centuries. This Road was divided by the famous Onion Range (Ts'ung-ling Mountains) into two sections. The western section was under the control of the Arabs, Persians and Turks; the eastern section was under the control of the Chinese and Uighur-Turks. It stretched eastward from Antioch in the Mediterranean, through Persia, Chinese Turkistan, Kansu province and ended at Ch'ang-an, the capital of the T'ang Empire in Shen-si province.<sup>62</sup>

Through this Road, five important nomadic peoples migrated into Central Asia from Northwest and Northeast China and shaped the history in West Asia during a period of fourteen hundred years, beginning in the 2nd century B.C.

The first nomadic tribe, Yüeh-chih (Indo-Scythians), was driven out of China in 140 B.C. by the combined force of Hsiung-nu and Wu-sun (Turks). The second tribe, Wu-sun, disappeared from the China scene shortly after the Yüeh-chih escaped into Central Asia. The third tribe, the Huns, was forced to migrate westward by the Han army under Emperor Wu-ti (r. 140-88 B.C.).<sup>63</sup> The fourth group of nomads, which was expelled out of China by the T'ang Chinese in 630, was the Eastern T'u-chüeh Turks. In



745, the Uighurs, another branch of the Turks, built their empire in the land vacated by the Eastern Turks<sup>64</sup>; they remained in Chinese Turkistan and never moved from there. The fifth nomadic tribe was the Mongols who marched into West As in the 13th century as world conquerors, not as refugees.

All these nomads were either Buddhists, pagans or Manichaeans. All of them settled down in Central Asia and in time, were integrated with the aborigines, except for the Hu who in the first century began their western movement toward Europe. Nothing could surprise us more than the Islamization in the 8th-11th centuries of the Yüeh-chih, Wu-sun and T'u-chüeh tribes, as a result of the Arab conquests of Khurasan, Afghanistan and Transoxiana in the 8th century. As to the 13th century Shamanist Mongols, the conquerors of almost all the Muslim countries and the founders of three khanates in West Asia, they were themselves converted to Islam within a period of less than eighty years. (1257-1334).

The Mongols in China had benefitted from using the Silk Road for bringing millions of Arabs, Persians, Turks and Uighurs into China. They made them their soldiers, particularly the "tammachi troops"<sup>65</sup>, civil agents, administrators and generals.

Interestingly enough, all the East Asian nomads, who crossed the Onion Range, whether as refugees or conquerors, without exception, one after the other, were Islamized. On



the contrary, all the Muslim Arabs, Persians, Turks, and Uighurs, who were forced to come to China to serve in the Mongol governments, were neither Buddhisized nor Confucianized, but remained believers-in-Islam. This is evidence that Islam was the Holy Power that had tamed the barbarious nomads without force, and it was its Holy Power that protected the Muslims from being indoctrinated by any other religion or ideology.

Since the Silk Road came into existence from the first century B.C., its traffic became more and more important as the frequency of the political, military, commercial and cultural contacts was increased between T'ang China and the Abbassid Caliphate, after the Sino-Arab war in Talase in 751.

This war resulted in the loss of Central Asia by China to the Arabs, but also brought about the close friendship between the two opponents. During the 8th-13th centuries, the people who benefitted most from this intercontinental route were not the Europeans, nor the Chinese, but the Muslims. They were those immigrants who were needed by the T'ang, Sung, and Yuan rulers. They imported Arabian, Persian and Turkish merchandise in exchange for Chinese silk, porcelain and precious metals. Their young men in several tens of thousands came to help the T'ang Empire to crush rebellions, or to join the Tibetans in their war in Nanchao.<sup>66</sup> Their businessmen helped the Sung Empire to develop international trade. Their military and political leaders and young soldiers helped the Mongols to build and to rule the Yuan Empire. Their scholars and mullahs settled down in



Northwest and Southeast China, preached Islam, built their own quarters, mosques and schools, from T'ang to Yuan times. This is why the Silk Road was the main artery for the expansion of Islam in Central Asia and China in the 8th-13th centuries.

## 2. How Ancient Arabia was Misnamed by the Chinese as Ta-shih

To the T'ang-Sung (618-1276) Chinese, Arabia was known as the Ta-shih, a term introduced by the first Arab envoy sent by the third Orthodox Caliph Othman (r. 644-656) to the court of T'ang Emperor Kao-tsung (r. 650-683) in 651. In his audience, the Arab envoy said: "[My] King [the Caliph] belongs to [the tribe of] Tā'f."<sup>67</sup> The Chinese court clerk transliterated Tā'f as '大食'. Ordinarily, the character '食' is pronounced 'shih' when it is used as a verb meaning to eat; it should be pronounced 'i' when it is used as a noun.<sup>68</sup> But the great majority of the Chinese, ancient or modern, did not know the difference in its usage; they simply called ancient Arabia Ta-shih, a term which had been used even by modern scholars.

There were two misunderstandings on the part of the T'ang court clerk about the difference between the country of Arabia and the Arab 'tribe of Tā'f. Either he did not listen carefully to what the Arab envoy said about Arabia, or he simply took the Tā'f tribe as the name of the Arab [kingdom], and transliterated it as Ta-i '大食'. His transliteration was correct, but the Chinese in later centuries mispronounced it as 'Ta-shih'. This philological misrepresentation, which has appeared not only in T'ang and Sung histories but also in modern writings



whenever ancient Arabia is mentioned, needs our correction.

In interpreting why ancient Arabia was misrepresented as Ta-shih, many modern scholars, who were interested in Chinese Islam, gave their opinions. Among them, both Friedrich Hirth and Marshall Broomhall, two famous European writers of the early 20th century, suggested that the Arabic word 'Ta-i' might be the corruption of the Persian word 'Tazik' (a people of Iranian race), or of a Persian word 'taguir' (a trader), or of an ancient Aramean word 'ta'i' (a nomad).<sup>69</sup> Their first two suppositions were definitely incorrect, because 'tazik' and 'taguir' represented, respectively, a Persian race and a Persian profession, neither of which had anything to do with a tribe in Arabia. The third supposition that it stood for 'ta'i' (a nomad) was the closest to the ancient Arabian tribal name of Tā'f, but both writers' interpretations were vague.

Another assumption by certain Chinese writers of the 13th century was that they confused Hui-Hui (Muslims) with the Uighur Turks in Chinese Turkistan who were named Hui-ho in Chinese and were also Muslims. This belief was also groundless because Hui-ho was a tribal name which did not identify the Turks as Muslims.<sup>70</sup>

### 3. How Was Chinese Islam Renamed 'Hui-Hui Chiao' in the 12th Century and Who Was the Promoter?

Exactly one hundred years after Islam was introduced to T'ang China by Caliph Othman's envoy in 651, the Sino-Arab war broke out in Talas in 751, which resulted in the Chinese loss of Central Asia to the Abbassid Caliphate. One of the Chinese prisoners captured by the Arabs was a Chinese scholar named Tu Huan. He



was the secretary of the Chinese commanding general, Kao Hsien-chih. Tu Huan was repatriated to China after having lived in Baghdad for twelve years. Upon his return home, he wrote his book, Ching Hsing Chi (Records of Experience and Travels throughout the West), containing his first-hand information on Islam, the Abbassid Caliphate and the Arab people. He called Arabia 'Ta-i Kuo' and Islam 'Ta-i Fa,' but he did not mention the words Arabia or Islam.<sup>71</sup>

Islam is the religion of all the Muslims, who may be Arabs, Persians, Mongols, Chinese, Europeans, Africans or Indians. It is a universal religion which is not confined to a certain territory or a certain race. The ancient Chinese transliterated Islam as 'Ta-shih Fa,' meaning "the Religion of Arabia," which was a religion of a locality, not that of the whole world.

'Ta-shih Fa,' a misnomer for Chinese Islam, had been known to and used by the T'ang-Sung Chinese for five centuries since 651. It seems that there had not been any Chinese scholar, historian or Muslim leader who had questioned into this terminological mistake or who had introduced any correction, until a famous descendent of the Holy Prophet came to China in the 11th century. He was Yusuf So-fei-er, the Marquis of Ning-I, a Sayyed of the 26th generation. He was also the ancestor of the distinguished Prime Minister under Khublai Khan, Prince Sayyed Edjill Chams-din Omar, the founder of the Islamic society in Southwest China.

When Sayyed Yusuf So-fei-er migrated to China with his



5,300 tribesmen in 1070 during the reign of the Northern Sung Emperor Shen-tsung (r. 1068-1085), he was allowed to preach Islam in North China.<sup>72</sup> It was this great Islamic teacher who introduced 'Hui-Hui Chiao' as the correct name for Chinese Islam to replace the 'Ta-shih Fa', which had been misnamed.

Both the Northern Sung and the Chin governments showed great respect for Marquis Sayyed So-fei-er. His promotion in preaching Islam among the nomads and the Chinese in North China was so effective that the Chin became possibly the first dynasty which recognized Hui-Hui Chiao as the official name for Chinese Islam in its history records. As many of So-fei-er's tribesmen were enrolled in the Chin army, the famous Chin Muslim Catapult Regiment bore the name of Hui-Hui Chün.<sup>73</sup>

Following suit of the Chin, the first emperor of Kara Khitan Yeh-lü Ta-shih (1095-1135) called the Khwarizm Shahs Hui-Hui Kuo (Islamic Country)<sup>74</sup> when he conquered Transoxiana in 1125. Later, the Yuan rulers called the Muslims Hui-Hui Jen, and the Muslim troops the Hui-Hui Chün.<sup>75</sup> This was how the terms of Hui-Hui Chiao, Hui-Hui Kuo and Hui-Hui (Muslim) became household words in China since the 12th century.

#### 4. Definition of Hui-Hui Chiao

One who wants to know about ancient Chinese Islam first should know the correct Chinese term for Islam. The correct ancient Chinese term for Islam, according to the T'ang court records in T'ang history, should be Ta-i Chiao, not the so-called Ta-shih Chiao. In truth, Islam should be transliterated as Islam. However there were no words in the Chinese language which could



be equivalent to Islam. The term of Ta-I Chiao or Ta-shih Ciao was merely a regional name and had nothing to do with the universal nature of Islam. We should understand why the Chinese Muslims under the leadership of Sayyed So-fei-er changed the Chinese name for Islam from Ta-I Chiao to Hui-Hui Chiao. They felt it was necessary to distinguish themselves as an individual group with their own distinct name.

When Sayyed So-fei-er was permitted by the Sung Emperor, Shen-tsung, to settle down and to preach Islam in North China in 1070, he immediately discovered that Islam as a religion had been misnamed by the Chinese as the Ta-Shih Fa. The first thing he did was to introduce the term '回回教' (Hui-Hui Chiao) to the Chinese and nomads as the new Chinese name for Islam to replace its old misnomer.

The meaning of the Chinese character '回' is to return. It is constructed with two squares, one large square in which there is a small one. It is an ancient Chinese hieroglyphical character. We do not know why it means to return. But to the great Islamic teacher, Sayyed So-fei-er, it might have been an enlightenment which led him to adopt the two same characters to form Islam's new Chinese name, Hui-Hui Chiao. This term meant the "Religion of Double Return," which, as Broomhall wrote in Islam in China, represented the Muslims' belief that they should "submit and return to Allah," and their "invariable custom to turning towards Mecca in prayer."<sup>76</sup> We should agree with Broomhall's excellent comment which is in



agreement with what was said in the Holy Koran:

Ch. II, Verse 46: "The humble ones who know that they will meet their Lord and that to Him they will return."

Ch. III, Verse 18: "Surely the Religion with Allah is Islam."

Ch. XI, Verse 4: "To Allah is your return."

The meaning of Hui-Hui Chiao is exactly "Islam is the Religion with Allah, to Whom we will return."

Forty years ago, if any one asked the Chinese Muslims what the meaning of the Chinese character '回' was, the answer would be unanimous: "The large square is the world and the small one is Mecca." It is very interesting to note that the Chinese Muslims built their square-shaped tombs in two layers. If the lower layer was 10' x 10' x 4', the top layer would be about 5' x 5' x 3'. It looked like '回' character in vertical dimension. Whenever there were such tombs, it meant it was a Muslim village.

The ancient Hui-Hui Chiao was a direct branch of Islam from Arabia. The first generation of the Muslims, numbering about 50,000, was chiefly made up of the descendents of the 77a Arabs. Their wives were the daughters of Han Chinese. Although their families had Han blood, their children continued to maintain their Islamic identity up until the present. They were not converted to Confucianism, Taoism or Buddhism but remained true to their ancestors' faith in Islam.

##### 5. Yuan Empire: the Nursery for the Growth of an Ethnic Hui-Hui Minority from Scattered Settlers

The Hui-Hui Minority was one of the five ethnic races by whom



the first Chinese Republic was formed in 1911. The other four were the Han, Mongol, Manchu and Tibetan peoples. The Hui-Hui people did not become an ethnic minority until the Yuan period. Before that period, they were chiefly Arab immigrants and some Persians. The great majority of them were soldiers, who after the wars were married to Chinese women and lived in Southwest and Northwest China during the T'ang-Sung times. A small number of them were traders who settled down in Southeast China. They were addressed by the Chinese according to their nationalities, and the Chinese never called them Muslims. Although their population increased from 50,000 to 2,000,000 during a period of 400 years (751-1100) through inter-marriage with the Chinese and by births, they had never expected that they would one day develop into an ethnic minority in the future.

Unexpectedly, their population was doubled in the Yuan period by the 2-3,000,000 young Muslims who were conscripted by the Mongols as soldiers from the Middle East, Persia and Central Asia. With this large number of new immigrants, all the Muslims in China, both the old and new generations, under the favorable political conditions of the Yuan Empire, were officially categorized as the second class citizen by the Yuan government, being next only to the Mongols, while the northern and southern Chinese were of the third and fourth class respectively. 77b

The Chinese Hui-Hui Minority was, probably, the first officially recognized multi-racial ethnic group in Chinese history. Usually, one race was formed by one kind of people, having one common ancestry, one culture, one language, one homeland, but sometime



with more than one religion. The factors of the formation of the Hui-Hui Minority were unorthodox. They consisted of more than one race; they came from different cultural backgrounds; they spoke different languages; they came from different areas. The only one factor that integrated them into one ethnic group was their unanimous belief in Islam. Under the light of Islam, their racial, cultural, linguistic and geographic differences were compromised. Without Islam as their common religion, it would have been impossible for these diversified races of people to be integrated into one ethnic minority in China.

The formation of the Hui-Hui Minority had three stages:

#### A. The Conception Stage

After having lived in China for four centuries (751-1070), the early Muslims gradually lost their ancestral identities, disconnected their relations with their old homes and had to start new families in China. Their Chinese wives would ask them: "Do you still plan to return to your homeland?" Their answer would be: "How could I leave you and my children here and go back to where I have no home?" Then both of them would ask: "Are we still Arabs, Persians or Turks, or have we become Chinese?" To these questions, they could not give a satisfactory answer. However, they began to have an ethnic consciousness that, one day, they should have their own ethnic identity, different from the Chinese, to demonstrate that they were integrated into a multi-blooded minority by Islam.

Their concept of their ethnic identity took an upturn when the famous Sayyed Yusuf So-fei-er, who came to North China



in 1070, announced to them that Muslims in China should be called Hui-Hui, meaning that they were the peoples, who, although they were of different races, were going to form into one minority because they believed in Islam and lived the Muslim life. This is what we may call the conception stage in the formation of the Chinese Hui-Hui Minority.

#### B. The Adolescent Stage

The 11th century Muslims' concept of having their own ethnic identity became a reality when the "Se-mu-jen" (the Sematic peoples, the majority of whom were Muslims in addition to a very small number of Christians and Jews) were granted by Khublai Khan the legal citizenship above the Han Chinese. 2,000,000 The Muslim settlers, whose ancestors came to China during the T'ang-Sung times, with the 2-3,000,000 young Muslim soldiers conscripted by the Mongols in the 13th century, aggregated a total of about 4,000,000 in the 14th century. They were those who helped Khublai Khan to build the Yuan Empire. That might have been the main reason why the Great Khan elevated their citizenship, and made many of their leaders his prime ministers, commanding generals and governors.

With the improvements in their political, military and social life and with the increase in their population, the formation of the Hui-Hui Minority had advanced from its conception stage into what we may call the adolescent stage. In this stage, the multi-racial Hui-Hui still spoke their individual dialects, practiced their individual customs, wore their individual dress and adopted their ancestral names. All these



were foreign to and disliked by the Chinese. To survive in ancient China, the foreigners had to adopt Chinese custom, speak Chinese, marry the Chinese, study Confucianist classics and work with the Chinese, but not necessarily give up their own ancestral religions. Otherwise, they would be expelled out of China.

### C. The Maturity Stage

The destruction of the Mongol Empire had undoubtedly brought about a very threatening threat to the adolescent Hui-Hui Minority, which was instantly thrown into an unknown future-- survival or elimination! Had the Ming Empire been an anti-non-Chinese power as were the Han (206 B.C. to 220 A.D.) and T'ang (618-907) Dynasties, the immature Hui-Hui Minority would not have been able to develop but would have been reduced into scattered settlers. On the contrary, the founder of the Ming Dynasty, Emperor Chu Yuan-chang (r. 1368-1398), not only did not expell the Hui-Hui peoples out of China, but he, in fact, declared to the whole country in his 1367 royal edict: "As for the Mongol and Se-mu peoples, although they are not Chinese, they live in this country, and if they follow [Chinese] propriety and morality and intend to be our subjects, [I] will take care of them as if they were Chinese."<sup>78</sup> He ordered them to learn the Chinese language, adopt Chinese names, wear Chinese dress, and marry Chinese.<sup>79</sup> But he never discouraged the Hui-Hui people to give up their belief in Islam. Under his protective and kind policies, the Hui-Hui Minority thrived and entered into its third stage, the stage of maturity.



### III. CONCLUSION: THE POPULATION OF THE HUI-HUI MINORITY AT THE END OF YUAN

Demographically, there were two zones in China where the Hui-Hui Minority, which numbered at least 4,000,000 at the end of the Yuan Dynasty, inhabited settlements, villages or farm land built by themselves, or lived in cities, industrial and traffic centers amidst the Chinese.

The first zone in a half-moon shape stretched from northern Shan-si province ( $40^{\circ}$  N. Latitude x  $110-115^{\circ}$  E. Longitude) southward and southward, through Shen-si, Kan-su, Ssu-ch'uan, Si-k'ang to Yün-nan province ( $22^{\circ}$  N. Latitude x  $100-108^{\circ}$  E. Longitude), then jumped over Kuang-si to Kuang-tung and Fu-chien provinces ( $22-28^{\circ}$  Latitude x  $110-120^{\circ}$  E. Longitude) in Southeast China. The Hui-Hui people who lived in this zone were mainly the descendents of the Arabs who settled down there in the 7th-10th centuries, with a small number of Muslim Persians.

The second zone in a long oblong shape started from Inner Mongolia ( $45^{\circ}$  N. Latitude x  $110-120^{\circ}$  E. Longitude) southward through the Ho-peí, Shan-si, Shang-tung, Ho-nan, Kiang-su, An-hui, Hu-peí, Hu-nan, Kiang-si provinces ( $25^{\circ}$  N. Latitude x  $110-122^{\circ}$  E. Longitude). This zone was the adopted homeland for the Arabs, Persians and Central Asians in the 13th-14th centuries.

There were, conservatively speaking, 2,000,000 Hui-Hui people in each zone. They formed the backbone of the Chinese Hui-Hui Minority. According to the 1290 Yuan national census, the Chinese population consisted of 58,834,711 mouths, an increase of 20.6 from the Northern Sung Dynasty 1110 census record



of 46,734,784 people. In the same period, the Hui-Hui Minority was increased by 100%, i.e. from 2,000,000 to 4,000,000. The percentage of the 4,000,000 Hui-Hui Minority compared to the total Chinese population of 58,834,711 was 6.8%, the highest percentage that the Hui-Hui Minority has gained in their twelve hundred year history in China.

It is obvious that Khublai Khan could not have established the Yuan Dynasty without the contributions and sacrifice of the Muslims. It is also true that the Muslims could not have formed the Hui-Hui Minority in China without the favored treatment and patronage of the Mongol rulers. Since the Mongols did not trust the Chinese, they had to depend upon the Muslims to conquer and rule China. Since the Muslims had no other choice but to live in China, they had to depend entirely upon the Mongols for survival. Through their mutual understanding, mutual help and mutual demands, the political marriage between the Mongols and the Muslims lasted almost one century (1279-1368).

When the Mongols were driven out of China by the Ming forces, the Hui-Hui peoples became leaderless and powerless orphans. Unexpectedly, the founder of the Ming Empire, Chu Yuan-chang, showered the Hui-Hui peoples with mercy and care, and treated them as if they were Chinese. Under Emperor Chu Yuan-chang and his descendents, the other fourteen emperors, the Hui-Hui Minority enjoyed a peaceful and prosperous life for a period of 276 years (1368-1644) and became the largest ethnic minority in China.



On another occasion, in 1370, when a Mongol prince, named Mai-te-li-pa-la, was captured in Kansu, the Ming general Li Wen-chung brought him to the capital. Some Ming officials suggested to Emperor Chu Yuan-chang that the prisoner should be used as a human sacrifice at the Ming Ancestral Temple according to the ancient Chinese palace law. To these suggesters, the Emperor angrily said: "China had been ruled by the Yuan Emperors for one hundred years. During that period, my ancestors as well as yours were dependent upon their mercy for existence and regeneration. What is in your heads that makes you have such an ungrateful and inhumane suggestion!"<sup>80</sup> And he ordered the prisoner immediately be released with honor. The magnitude of the Emperor's kindness to, justice with and love for the Mongols and the Muslims has not been matched by any one of the rulers in China after the Ming period.

Why the founder of the Ming Empire, Chu Yuan-chang, and his successors took care of the Hui-Hui Minority and were so kind to the Mongols has been a puzzle. Unfortunately, there has not been any scholar within the past six hundred years who has done the necessary and conclusive research to unlock this puzzle. For the purpose of finding an explanation, the writer has first written this article on the Mongols and the Muslims as a prelude to his next article, The Ming Empire and Chinese Islam, which will reveal the religious background of the glorious Ming Empire which was a Muslim Dynasty, not a Han Empire.

There were many other contributions made by the Muslims



to the Yuan Empire, such as Islamic art, architecture, astronomy, firearms, literature and medicine, which are not covered in this article, because the main subjects under discussion here are the impact of the Mongols on the Muslim world, the impact of Islam on the Mongols and the impact of the Yuan Dynasty on the Chinese Hui-Hui Minority.



MONGOL CONQUESTS: THEIR IMPACT ON THE MUSLIM COUNTRIES  
AND ON THE CHINESE HUI-HUI MINORITY IN THE 13-14TH  
CENTURIES

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The Ming Empire and Chinese Islam, which the writer plans to complete in 1984.

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36. Ch'en Yü-ch'ing, tr. P'u Shou-keng K'ao (Study of Life of P'u Shou-keng, by Kuwabara), (Shanghai: Chung-hua Book Press, 1954), p. 214. Pa-lin, a geographical term in Chinese, was actually the sea-port, al-Bahrain in the Persian Gulf. Pai-yen was born in Pa-lin, and because his grandfather, Ah-la-hei, was a Mongol general under Chingis Khan and was married to a female descendent of the Holy Prophet, Pai-yen was a Mongol-Arab Sayyed by birth. See also Sung Lien, op. cit., p. 642.
37. Sung Lien, op. cit., "Pai-yen", p. 1502.
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